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**NOTICE**

**VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR SPANISH LANGUAGE  
INTERPRETERS SERVING VIRGINIA COURTS**

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Information and Registration Materials**

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## **VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR SPANISH LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS SERVING VIRGINIA COURTS**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Judicial Council of Virginia has developed a process to certify persons serving as Spanish language interpreters in court proceedings in the Commonwealth. The certification process is voluntary for participants. Its purpose is to better ensure that language interpreters are competent to perform such services in a court environment. Certification for Spanish language interpreters is offered because Spanish is the most frequently spoken language in court proceedings involving non-English speaking persons in Virginia. The end result of each certification process is the distribution of a list of Spanish language interpreters who have satisfied all certification requirements. This list and a guide to interpreter use in Virginia courts are public information and are available by contacting the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, or by visiting the Virginia Judicial System's website at [www.courts.state.va.us](http://www.courts.state.va.us). Courts and others may use the list to contact certified Spanish language interpreters and to arrange for their services as needed.

Although the Judicial Council encourages all courts to utilize certified interpreters since they have proven their competency and skill level, there is no requirement that only certified interpreters be used for the provision of language interpretation and translation services in courts. The judge is the final arbiter of any interpreter's qualifications. Non-certified interpreters may contact local courts directly to discuss the potential for provision of interpreter services.

### **CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS: THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION**

In order to earn Spanish language interpreter certification in Virginia, candidates must fulfill four criteria: (1) complete a two-part written test; (2) complete two-day orientation training in full; (3) agree to adhere to the Code of Professional Responsibility for Foreign Language Interpreters Serving Virginia Courts; and (4) complete an oral exam.

#### **1. Successfully complete a written test on general English language vocabulary, court-related terms and usage, and ethics and professional conduct.; as well as translate 5 English sentences into Spanish.**

As the first step in the certification process, candidates must pass a two-part written test. Part 1 of the written test covers general English language vocabulary, court-related terms and usage, and ethics and professional conduct. This part is 135 multiple-choice questions that are designed to measure basic, general English language proficiency, court and ethics knowledge. The second part of the written test is the translation of 10 sentences from English into Spanish. Part 1 of the written test will be scored on a percentage basis and Part 2 will be graded on a "pass/fail" basis. Candidates must score a minimum of 80% on Part 1 of the written test and receive a "Pass" on Part 2 in order to be eligible to register for the mandatory two-day orientation training course. Candidates will be notified of the test results via U.S. mail soon after the conclusion of the testing sessions.

Candidates must pre-register to take the written test by August 4, 2006. The fee for the written test is \$50.00. The test will be held on Friday, August 11, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Candidates may choose to take the test at either time. There are 50 slots available for each time and are available on a first come, first serve basis.

The Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia cannot reimburse participants for lodging, transportation, meals or any other travel-related expenses incurred.

Each pre-registered participant will receive a confirmation letter in the mail prior to the requested testing or training session to verify receipt of payment and to obtain access to the training; please bring this letter

and photo identification with you to the training session. If the session(s) should reach maximum capacity, fees for those unable to participate will be refunded. However, if you pre-register and do not attend, the fee is not refundable. Payment (check or money order only) must be received by Wednesday February 8, 2006 in order to pre-register. If your payment has not been received by the Office of the Executive Secretary by February 8<sup>th</sup> your spot will be given to someone else. NO walk-ins will be accepted.

No children and/or guests of participants will be permitted to attend for any reason. No one will be admitted without payment. Dress is business casual.

As of January 1, 2006, written examination scores and past orientation attendance will only be accepted for up to 3 years. For this reason, anyone who took the written examination or attended orientation training before January 1, 2003 will need to sign up to take step one in the certification process.

## **2. Complete orientation training as established by the Judicial Council of Virginia.**

Once candidates have passed the written test, a two-day orientation training course must be completed. The training fee includes materials that will be distributed in a notebook at the training sessions. Candidates for certification receive training regarding the role of the interpreter, the specific skills needed for the different modes of interpreting and “do’s and don’ts” on the job. They receive instruction and materials, including a glossary of terms to improve their understanding of the court system and legal procedures. The training also includes an overview of self-study techniques and available resources and information on and suggestions for preparing for the oral certification examination. The fee for the orientation training session is \$250.00.

As with the written examination sessions, the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia cannot reimburse participants for lodging, transportation, meals or any other travel-related expenses incurred. The orientation training session will be held on Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The orientation will be held at the Holiday Inn Select-Koger Center in Chesterfield, VA. Lodging is available at the Holiday Inn Select-Koger Center at the \$88/night government rate, however, this expense must be paid for by the participant. Directions will be provided in your confirmation packet. Check-in will begin at 8:00 a.m. with the program beginning at 8:30 a.m.

The training sessions are led by nationally known experts on court interpretation. Candidates must attend the full two-day session (8:30 AM – 5:00 PM each day) in order to fulfill the training requirement component of the interpreter certification process. Individuals with less than full attendance may not be credited with meeting this requirement, per discretion of the Supreme Court representatives.

Space at the orientation training session(s) may be limited. All spots will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Each pre-registered participant will receive a confirmation letter in the mail prior to the requested training session to verify receipt of payment and to obtain access to the training; please bring this letter and photo identification with you to the training session. If the training session(s) should reach maximum capacity, fees for those unable to participate will be refunded. However, if you pre-register and do not attend, the fee is not refundable. Walk-ins will NOT be accepted.

Payment (check or money order only) must be received by **October 15, 2006** in order to pre-register to reserve your space. A registration packet will be mailed with the test results if the candidate scored an 80% or higher on the Part 1 and a “Pass” on Part 2 of the written exam.

No children and/or guests of participants will be permitted to attend for any reason. No one will be admitted without payment. Dress is business casual.

The Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia cannot reimburse participants for lodging, transportation, meals or any other travel-related expenses incurred.

**3. Agree to adhere to the Code of Professional Responsibility for Foreign Language Interpreters Serving Virginia Courts.**

All candidates will receive a copy of the Code of Professional Responsibility along with training materials to be distributed at the orientation training session. The Code is also available on the Virginia Judicial System's website at [www.courts.state.va.us](http://www.courts.state.va.us). Significant review and discussion of the Code is a component of the orientation training session. Candidates who achieve certification must sign an agreement to adhere to the Code.

**4. Successfully complete the Spanish language interpreter certification oral exam.**

Candidates must demonstrate proficiency in the modes of interpretation:

- a. simultaneous interpretation from English to Spanish;
- b. consecutive interpretation, English to Spanish and Spanish to English;
- c. sight translation of an English document into Spanish; and
- d. sight translation of a Spanish document into English.

An objective test is recognized as the only reliable way to assess interpreter qualifications. The oral exam administered in Virginia was developed under the auspices of the National Center for State Courts in Williamsburg, Virginia and the administrative office of the Virginia courts, in order to ensure its reliability and suitability for use in Virginia. In line with guidelines promulgated by the State Court Interpreter Certification Consortium (of which Virginia is a member), in order to pass the certification examination, the *minimum* acceptable score on each of four individual test sections must be at least 70%. Therefore, the *minimum* total average test score must be at least 70%. The fee for taking the oral exam is \$150.00.

For your information, the oral exams will be conducted in Richmond at the Supreme Court Building January 22 – 26, 2007. Once a candidate has completed the two-day orientation training they are eligible to proceed to the oral exam and will receive information on how to schedule the one-hour time slot necessary for test administration. Additional information on taking the oral exam will be provided to all eligible candidates once they have completed the orientation training.

## **PROGRAM COSTS**

### **Written Test**

The written test is offered at a cost of \$50.00, payable in advance using the form on page 8.

### **Orientation Training**

The two-day orientation training course is offered at a cost of \$250.00, payable in advance.

### **Oral Exam**

The oral exam is offered at a cost of \$150.00. You will receive test payment instructions along with additional testing information at the orientation training.

## **FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**1. What does “voluntary” certification mean?**

In Virginia, all courts are encouraged to utilize certified interpreters first since they have proven their competency and skill level. However, there is no statutory requirement that only certified interpreters be used for the provision of language interpretation and translation services in courts. The judge is the final arbiter of every interpreter's qualifications.

**2. What if I have completed the orientation training but not passed the written exam?**

Candidates who have not passed the written exam must complete and pass the written exam before being eligible to take the oral exam. The Office of the Executive Secretary will no longer accept orientation training or written exam scores that are more than 3 years old.

**3. What if I pass the written exam and complete the orientation training session but decide not to take the oral exam?**

Candidates are not required to sit for the oral exam if, after completing the training and passing the written test, they decide not to continue the certification process. However, the \$250.00 training fee will not be refunded. Candidates may schedule an oral exam during a future program offering.

**4. I completed orientation training prior to January 1, 2003, but I have never taken the oral exam. Am I required to take the written test before scheduling an oral exam time slot?**

Yes. The Office of the Executive Secretary will no longer accept orientation training or written exam scores that are more than 3 years old.

**5. I completed orientation training prior to January 1, 2003 and failed the oral test. Am I required to attend the training again? Am I required to take the written test before re-scheduling an oral exam time slot?**

Yes. The Office of the Executive Secretary will no longer accept orientation training or written exam scores that are more than 3 years old.

**6. I completed orientation training and passed the written exam in another state, can I register for the oral exam in Virginia without taking the orientation training and written exam again?**

No. The Commonwealth of Virginia does not accept pieces of the certification process from other states or the federal certification program. Virginia will accept full certification from other states and the federal court system but not pieces.

**7. What is the State Court Interpreter Certification Consortium and what other types of Spanish language interpreter certification does Virginia accept?**

The Judicial Council of Virginia considers presumptively eligible any person who has successfully completed the full requirements for federal court certification or certification by a state judicial system participating in the State Court Interpreter Certification Consortium administered by the National Center for State Courts. Please visit the Consortium's website at [www.ncsconline.org](http://www.ncsconline.org) for additional information. Eligible persons who provide required documentation may be added to Virginia's list of certified Spanish language interpreters.

If an individual falls into this category, please contact the Judicial Planning Department, Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia at 804/786-6455 to initiate the required paperwork for addition to Virginia's certified Spanish language interpreter list.

**8. After the written exam, how do I register for my orientation training session.?**

If candidates have not attended the two-day orientation session in the past three (3) years, they must pass the written test before registering for the two-day orientation training session. Candidates will be notified via U.S. mail of the results of the written test soon after the conclusion of the testing sessions. Candidates who score a minimum of 80% on Part 1 and “Pass” Part 2 are eligible to proceed to the orientation

training. Those candidates who are now eligible to proceed to the orientation training will be provided with registration materials.

**9. After the orientation training, how do I schedule my oral exam time slot?**

Candidates will schedule oral exam time slots by signing up at the end of the two day orientation training or telephoning the Judicial Planning Department, Office of the Executive Secretary at 804/786-6455. For your information, oral exams will be conducted in Richmond at the Supreme Court Building, January 22 – 26, 2006.

Prior to the start of the oral exam, candidates with scheduled exam times will receive an information packet in the mail confirming their appointment date and time and specifying all procedural details regarding the oral exam, including directions to the Supreme Court Building and procedures for paying the \$150.00 fee. Candidates must complete the orientation training requirements in full and pass the written and ethics test (if not eligible for a waiver) in order to sit for the oral exam.

**10. I am interested in becoming a certified Spanish language interpreter in Virginia, but I cannot attend the program at this time. When is the next Spanish language interpreter certification process going to be offered?**

The next test dates will be:

March 2, 2007: Written Exam

April 21-22, 2007: Orientation Training

May 21 – 25, 2007: Oral Exam

These dates are subject to change. Check the Supreme Court of Virginia's website at [www.courts.state.va.us](http://www.courts.state.va.us) in January for Registration Materials and the firm dates.

**11. If I took the written exam but did not pass one of the sections, when can I retake it?**

It is recommended by the National Center for State Courts, and the Supreme Court of Virginia has set up the policy that no portion of the written exam be taken more than once in a 12 month period.

**12. If I passed one portion of the written test do I have to retake both sections?**

No, if one section of the written exam has been passed it will not need to be taken again unless it has been longer than 3 years.

**13. If I took the oral exam but did not pass one or more of the sections do have I have to retake the entire oral exam?**

Yes. The Supreme Court of Virginia does not offer sections of the oral exam.

**14. I am interested in earning certification in a language other than Spanish. Does Virginia certify foreign language interpreters in any other languages?**

At the present time, Virginia offers interpreter certification in the Spanish language only.

**15. I am interested in earning federal certification. How do I become a federally certified foreign language interpreter?**

Candidates looking to become federally certified will need to contact the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts at (916)263-3494. Information is also available on their website at [www.cps.ca.gov/fcice-spanish/](http://www.cps.ca.gov/fcice-spanish/).

**16. How are foreign language interpreters appointed to work in Virginia?**

Although the Judicial Council of Virginia encourages all of the state's courts to utilize certified interpreters (where available) since they will have proven their competency and skill level, there is *no* requirement that only certified interpreters be used for the provision of language interpretation and/or translation services in Virginia's courts. By statute (Va. Code §§ 19.2-164 and 8.01-384.1:1), the judge is

the final arbiter of any interpreter's qualifications. The certified Spanish language interpreter list is public information and is intended for use as a resource which courts and others may use to contact certified Spanish interpreters directly and to arrange for their services as needed.

Also set by the above-referenced statutes, compensation rates for an interpreter appointed by the court are fixed by the court. Achieving certification does not qualify or entitle an interpreter to any amount other than that set by and/or approved by the court.

**17. Whom do I call if I have additional question(s) not answered in this Notice?**

Please direct any questions regarding certification to the Judicial Planning Department, Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia at 804/786-6455.

Return this form with your check or money order payable to the Treasurer of Virginia for \$50.00 to:

Supreme Court of Virginia  
Office of the Executive Secretary  
Judicial Planning Department  
100 North Ninth Street, Third Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

**VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR SPANISH LANGUAGE  
INTERPRETERS SERVING VIRGINIA COURTS**

**WRITTEN EXAMINATION REGISTRATION FORM**

Check **one** box only:

Friday, August 11, 2006 – 9:00 a.m.

Friday, August 11, 2006 – 1:00 p.m.

Please **print** the following information:

FULL NAME

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SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

---

FULL MAILING ADDRESS

---

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TELEPHONE NUMBER(S)

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